

# Notes From The Field *SE*

## Duck Opener Report 9/25/18

### UPDATE:

*Was this helpful? Let us know by taking this [3 question survey](#).*

### **Green Lake/Marquette**

Early seasons in this area showed low to moderate pressure for early teal season and early Canada goose season. We typically see moderate to high pressure in this area for the duck season opener and will expect similar pressure to prior years. Our most abundant ducks in the area are mallard, wood ducks and blue-winged teal. With recent weather there will be high water and that high water affected/greatly reduced the rice crop on most flowages in our area. With the high water and heavy winds cattail mats also have been moved. Most recently we have been experiencing warm weather, accompanied by both sunny and rainy spells and expect cool and rainy conditions for the regular duck season opener.

Regarding duck broods, we have observed similar numbers compared to previous years for mallards and wood ducks in our area. Blue-winged teal seemed to have had lower production this year as we observed fewer broods this year compared to prior years. Canada goose broods also seemed lower than in previous years in our area, likely due to the late snow we received in April. For total number of birds, we expect similar numbers to previous years in Green Lake and Marquette counties. Aquatic food availability is normal with wild rice being our top wetland foods on the landscape.

### **Sheboygan/Eastern Fond du Lac**

Early seasons in this area showed moderate to high pressure for early teal, moderate pressure for early Canada goose and low to moderate pressure for the youth season. We typically see moderate to high pressure in this area for duck season opener and will expect similar pressure to prior years. Our most abundant ducks in the area are mallard, wood ducks and teal. With recent weather there will be high water and that has changed our earlier report of Sheboygan marsh being drawn down. Now that marsh is just below full pool and other area ponds are very full as well. Most recently we have been experiencing warm sunny weather and expect cool and rainy conditions for the regular duck season opener.

Regarding duck broods, we have observed fewer broods for mallards, blue-winged teal, wood ducks and Canada geese likely due to the late snow we received in April. For total number of birds, we expect lower numbers compared to previous years in our area. Aquatic food availability is normal with duckweed, smartweeds, and macro-invertebrates (snails, mussels, etc.) being our top wetland foods on the landscape.

### **Dodge**

Early seasons in this area showed low to moderate pressure for early teal, early Canada goose and the youth hunt. We typically see moderate to high pressure in this area for the duck season opener and will expect similar pressure to previous years. Our most abundant ducks in the area are mallard, wood ducks, and teal. With recent weather there will be high water that may limit access to some areas and created some damage. Most recently we have been experiencing sunny and warm weather and expect cool and rainy conditions for the regular duck season opener.

Regarding duck broods, we have observed less numbers compared to previous years for mallards and blue-winged teal. Wood ducks seemed to have similar production this year compared to previous years. Canada goose broods also seemed to be less than in previous years in our area, likely due to the late snow we received in April. For total number of birds, we expect lower numbers to previous years in the area. Aquatic food availability is normal with bidens, smartweed and millet being our top wetland foods on the landscape.

## **Jefferson**

Early seasons in this area showed low to moderate pressure for early teal, early Canada goose and the youth hunt. We typically see high pressure in this area for the duck season opener and will expect higher pressure compared to years past. Our most abundant ducks in the area are mallard, wood ducks and blue-winged teal. With recent weather there will be higher water than a typical year. Most recently we have been experiencing warm weather and expect cool and rainy conditions for the regular duck season opener.

High water throughout Jefferson County will provide ample opportunity for hunters to get out and find a spot to set up. Often, hunters worry that a lot of water will spread the ducks out and make it difficult for ducks and hunters to concentrate on one location. My experience has been high water brings ducks to the area and a nice decoy spread really helps bring them into range - ducks in the area is never a bad thing so do your scouting early to hone in on high use waterfowl areas. Princes Point, Rome Pond, Jefferson Marsh, and Zeloski Marsh Wildlife Areas are full of water and ready for the duck hunters (Sam Jonas – Jefferson County Wildlife Biologist).

Regarding duck broods, we have observed similar numbers compared to previous years for blue-winged teal and other ducks. Mallards and wood ducks seemed to have good production this year as we saw more broods this year compared to previous years. Canada goose broods however seemed to be less than in previous years in our area, likely due to the late snow we received in April. For total number of birds, we expect more numbers compared to previous years in the area. Aquatic food availability is normal with bidens, algae, and smartweed being our top wetland foods on the landscape.

## **Waukesha/Walworth**

Early seasons in this area showed low pressure for early teal, early Canada goose and the youth hunt. We typically see high pressure in this area for duck season opener and will expect similar pressure to previous years. Our most abundant ducks in the area are mallard, wood ducks and teal. With recent weather there will be high water improving access by boat but hindering some access by foot. Most recently we have been experiencing warm and rainy weather and expect cool and rainy conditions for the regular duck season opener.

Regarding duck broods, we have observed similar numbers compared to previous years for mallards in our area., Canada goose broods however seemed to be less than compared to previous years in our area, likely due to the late snow we received in April. Aquatic food availability is less than normal on the landscape.

## **Rock/Green**

Early seasons in this area showed low to moderate pressure for early teal, early Canada goose and the youth hunt. We typically see moderate pressure in this area for the duck season opener and will expect similar pressure to previous years. Our most abundant ducks in the area are wood ducks, mallard and teal. High water has made it difficult to access sites (launches closed), and swift currents can make

boating/paddling difficult. Most recently we have been experiencing warm and rainy weather and expect cool and rainy conditions for the regular duck season opener. Flooded farm fields are good areas to locate birds - knock on doors and see if you can hunt private property.

Regarding duck broods, we have observed similar numbers compared to previous years for mallards, wood ducks, blue-winged teal and other ducks. Canada goose broods also seemed similar to other years in our area. For total number of birds, we expect similar numbers compared to previous years in the area. Aquatic food availability is normal on the landscape.

## **Statewide**

Wisconsin statewide outlook for this season looks similar to previous years. Brood counts seem average for mallards, blue-winged teal, wood ducks and other ducks. Canada goose numbers however seem to have been affected statewide due to the late snowfall we received in April that may affected our nesting geese. Late snowstorms in April set nesting back and caused a lot of first attempt failures across the state. Water levels across the state are variable with many places being near normal, with exceptions in southern and central Wisconsin. Southern Wisconsin has seen almost daily rainfall starting mid-August making water levels considerably higher than normal. Wetland food across the state seems to be similar to previous years and crop harvest also seems to be similar in most areas with corn being slightly ahead of a normal year.

To be successful we encourage all of you to get out and scout before your hunting trips. Waterfowl hunters in Wisconsin have shown that hunters who scout 3 times before hunting shoot three times as many birds. It will be important also to check your spots out before hunting as some spots may not be huntable due to high water.

Be safe and happy hunting!

### **5 Important things to know:**

1. North duck zone will open one week later than in previous years, resulting in a single statewide opener for the North, South and Mississippi zones on Sept. 29;
2. Elimination of the Horicon Canada goose Management Zone (resulting in a single statewide regular goose zone);
3. Increase in the daily Canada goose bag limit to three birds per day and there is a second split in the Southern Canada goose zone resulting in a goose season that is open during the Christmas and New Year's holidays; and
4. Canada goose hunters, registration of Canada geese and in-field validation of the Canada goose hunting permit is no longer required.
5. Check out [The Basics of Waterfowl Hunting in Wisconsin](#) document on the [Waterfowl Hunting](#) webpage along with other useful tools in our Hunter resources tab for a few tips and tricks!

If you have any questions, please contact Trenton Rohrer WDNR Assistant Migratory Game Bird Ecologist send him an email or call.

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